

Sandwell MBC Local Development Scheme



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

February 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and sets out:
- the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) to be prepared;
 - the subject matter and geographical area to which each DPD is to relate;
 - the timetable for the preparation and revision of the DPDs; and
 - the timetable for the preparation of the Council's Design Code.
- 1.2 The LDS sets out the timetable for the preparation or revision of any documents covering Sandwell for the period 2025-2028 and supersedes all previous versions of the Sandwell LDS.

2 Sandwell Development Plan Documents

- 2.1 The current Local Development Documents, which are to be defined as Development Plan Documents, covering the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council local authority area through this LDS are: -
- Black Country Core Strategy – adopted 2011 (subsequently Black Country Plan)
 - Sandwell Site Allocations & Delivery Development Plan Document - adopted 2012
 - West Bromwich Area Action Plan – adopted 2012
 - Smethwick Area Action Plan – adopted 2008
 - Tipton Area Action Plan – adopted 2008
 - Statement of Community Involvement - adopted 2022
- 2.2 The Black Country Core Strategy was a strategic plan prepared jointly by the four Black Country authorities to cover the Black Country area (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) for the period 2006-2026. The Core Strategy addressed strategic priorities for the Black Country, covered all subject areas at a strategic level and indicated broad locations for development on a key diagram. When it was adopted in 2011, the Core Strategy replaced various policies and allocations in the Sandwell Unitary Development Plan (2004).
- 2.3 The Area Action Plans were prepared to set out local policies, allocations and designations for key regeneration areas identified in the Black Country Core Strategy. These Area Action Plans replaced various policies and allocations in the Sandwell Unitary Development Plan when they were adopted.

3 Timetable for Preparation and Revision of Sandwell Development Plan Documents

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires all local planning authorities to complete a review of local plan documents that have been adopted for five or more years and to decide either:

- that their policies do not need revising and publish their reasons for this decision; and / or
- that one or more policies do need revising and update their LDS to set out the timetable for this revision.

3.2 This LDS fulfils the requirements of the NPPF in this regard, as set out below:

DPD	Years since adoption	Need for revision 2025-28?	Current position and way forward
Black Country Core Strategy	13	N/a	Review abandoned. Replacement strategy, the Black Country Plan, was abandoned for political reasons in late 2022.
Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery DPD (Sandwell Local Plan)	12	Yes	Review currently underway and revision timetable included in this LDS. Now known as the Sandwell Local Plan (SLP) which was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 11th December 2024.
West Bromwich Area Action Plan	12	Yes	In recognition of the levels of cost and time that are needed to pursue a separate Area Action Plan, the inclusion of the revised WBAAP in the new SLP has taken place: the WBAAP forms the basis of a discrete chapter in the SLP. Profiles / insets are also provided for Sandwell's other main town centres as part of the same exercise. The West Bromwich interim planning statement and masterplan have been prepared to provide certainty for developers bringing forward new schemes until the new Local Plan is adopted.
Smethwick Area Action Plan	16	Yes	Profiles / insets of town centres within Smethwick now form part of the emerging SLP, which was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 11 th December 2024.
Tipton Area Action Plan	16	Yes	Profiles / insets of Tipton town centre now forms part of the emerging SLP, which was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 11th December 2024.

- 3.3 From 2016 to 2022, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, with Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall Councils, carried out work on the proposed review of the Black Country Core Strategy. The scope of the new Black Country Plan was intended to be wider than the existing Core Strategy, including new site allocations and a review of existing allocations, where appropriate. It also included strategic policies for the Black Country, as defined in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.4 The BCP went through a round of public consultation that attracted around 20,000 comments and objections. Around half of these related to sites in the Dudley green belt. Dudley Council eventually withdrew from the BCP review process, and the four Black Country authorities then decided to undertake their own separate local plans. These plans will draw on the evidence base and draft policies drawn up for the BCP but will relate more specifically to the individual local authority.
- 3.5 The Sandwell Local Plan review was brought forward to replace the BCP. Work was undertaken on an initial Issues and Options document, that went out to public consultation during February - March 2023.
- 3.6 Building on the responses to the Issues and Options paper, a draft SLP was produced and went out to consultation between 6th November and 18th December 2023.
- 3.7 Following analysis of representations made to the draft Plan at Regulation 18, The Council published the Sandwell Local Plan on 23rd September 2024 for a period of 7 weeks until 11th November 2024. The Sandwell Local Plan was subsequently submitted to the Secretary of State on the 11th December 2024.
- 3.8 The revised timetable for the Sandwell Local Plan is set out below:

Sandwell Local Plan

Issues & Options Consultation	February - March 2023
Draft Plan consultation (Reg 18)	November - December 2023
Plan Publication	Autumn 2024
Submission to Secretary of State and Examination in Public	December 2024
Adoption	Late 2025 – early 2026

4. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

4.1 The Council has a number of SPDs that require review and updating. Many of these will fall away when the Sandwell Local Plan is adopted. However, the following will still require review:

- The preparation of Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
- Planning obligations
- Air Quality (this is a joint Black Country document)

A timetable for the review of these documents will be prepared in due course.

5. The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 – Implications for the Sandwell Local Plan

5.1 The release of the NPPF 2024 has implications for the Sandwell Local Plan almost immediately. Paragraph 236 states that where a Local Plan has been examined under the NPPF 2023, “if the housing requirement in the plan to be adopted meets less than 80% of local housing need the local planning authority will be expected to begin work on a new plan, under the revised plan-making system provided for under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (as soon as the relevant provisions are brought into force in 2025), in order to address the shortfall in housing need.

5.2 Therefore, the Council will be required to make an assessment of housing need using the revised standard method and commence a review of the Sandwell Local Plan. A potential revised timetable is as follows:

Update of housing requirement using the revised standard method	January 2026
Review of Local Plan policies and allocations	January 2026
Issues and Options (Reg18)	May/June 2026
Draft Plan (Reg18)	November/December 2026
Publication (Reg19 and 20)	June 2027
Submission (Reg22)	December 2027
Examination	2028
Adoption	2028

6. Sandwell Design Code

6.1 Sandwell Council has a mandatory requirement, through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, to produce a design code for the borough. The current Residential Design Guide SPD is outdated and this requirement brings an opportunity to provide a more robust policy document that is based on current national urban design guidance.

6.2 The purpose of the Design Code is to:

- Provide up-to-date design guidance for the Borough (Supplementary Plan) which is policy compliant under the NPPF/LURA.
- Align positively with the emerging new Sandwell Local Plan for the borough but not replicate its content – build on producing a higher level of detail.
- Be used to encourage and promote good design and to reject and refuse poorly designed schemes. The Code will be used as a material consideration to inform planning decisions (used primarily by Planning Policy, Development Management and Highways etc).
- Provide certainty on what is deemed as ‘good design’ for prospective users through the provision of clear and concise examples and standards expected.

6.3 The Design Guide is intended to be in two parts:

Part 1 will establish general good urban design principles that would apply to development across the Borough, general area typology/types based around the areas typical urban/suburban context whilst also acknowledging the Sandwell Valley and green belt, considered more rural.

Part 2 will focus on the growth /regeneration areas as identified through the emerging Sandwell Local Plan:

- West Bromwich & Carters Green
- Dudley Port & Tipton
- Smethwick
- Wednesbury

The code will address the different characteristics that make up each regeneration area and will reflect the need for sustainable and innovative forms of development with appropriate forms of highway, amenity and environmental solutions.

6.4 The timetable for the production of the Design Code is as follows:

Stage 1 – analysis and scoping	March – June 2025
Stage 2 – design vision, analysis, consultation and engagement	July 2025 - February 2026
Stage 3 – Develop Design Code	March - June 2026
Stage 4 – Supplementary Plan	July – December 2026